

Small Group Discussion Questions - Winter Semester // Week Four

Remember, these questions are just tools for discussion. You don't need to 'get through them all'. Use the questions that are helpful, skip the questions that are not. And let the conversation flow naturally.

Optional Ice Breaker(s)

- a) Where were you born? Were both of your parents born in Canada? As much as you feel open to sharing, tell us a little bit about your heritage.
- b) What is one of your favourite activities to do on the water? Do you like water-based sports, or would you prefer to simply lie on the beach?

Passage and Discussion

Read Jonah 1:1-16

- a) What stands out to you upon first reading of this passage? What is a theme, verse, or word that you find encouraging? What do you find challenging in this passage?
- b) On Sunday, we were reminded that Jonah chose not to pray to God, even when he was in a dangerous situation. Why do you think Jonah decided not to pray to God, even if it could mean death in a storm? What does this tell us about Jonah's state of mind during this storm?
- c) What are a few reasons that you think people choose not to pray to God, even if they believe that He exists and that He hears our prayers? Why do we often default to struggling, problem solving, even despair and confusion, before we pray?
- d) How can you relate to Jonah's refusal to pray in your own life? Have you ever walked through a season of your life, and for whatever reason, you chose not to talk to God about it? Why do you think you avoided prayer during this season? Does our closeness / distance to God, impact how easy it is to come to God in prayer?
- e) As Cam taught on Sunday, the sailors asked Jonah a few questions about himself. In answering these questions, Jonah revealed that his ethnicity is the most important part of his identity. What does this tell us about Jonah? How do you think this answer connects to his refusal to go and preach to Nineveh?
- f) Tim Keller says *"If [Jonah's] race was more foundational to his self-image than his faith, it begins to explain why Jonah was so opposed to calling Nineveh to repentance. That is why, when loyalty to his people and loyalty to the Word of God seemed to be in conflict, he chose to support his nation over taking God's love and message to a new society."* Where would you say your allegiance lies? Is there something that you would choose to protect over God?

- g) What are a few examples of ways that people in our world identify themselves today? What are the primary ways that our culture encourages people to self-identify? What are a few problems that we experience when we find our identity in the world around us?
- h) How do you define your identity? How would you respond to these questions, if someone asked you to identify yourself? How would you say others would describe or identify you?
- i) Read **2 Corinthians 5:16-21** and **Galatians 3:26-29**. How are Christians taught to self-identify, according to Scripture? If we have accepted Christ, what is our primary identity?
- j) On Sunday, Cam reminded us that, when we find our identity in the world around us, we tend to see people who are different from us as “other”. Have you ever struggled with seeing a group of people that you don’t identify with as “other”? What is your default way of identifying others?
- k) Read **v13-14**. Throughout this passage, Jonah remains silent before God - even as certain death is approaching. Why do you think this is?
- l) Read **v16**. What about the sailors’ response makes you think that this was a genuine conversion, rather than an act of desperation? Notice the timing of the vows. What does the timing of the vows say about their response to God?
- m) God uses Jonah (even without him knowing it), to save the lost sailors. What does this tell us about God’s sovereignty and the way He works? Is this encouraging to you?
- n) Was there anything else in the message on Sunday that stood out to you as impactful or challenging?

Take it Home (Optional Ideas for Response this Week)

- a) In verse 10, we are reminded that Jonah was in this situation because he was “running away from God”. Although it may be difficult, take a few minutes this week to pray that God would show you any part of your life where you are running away from Him. Ask Him to help you surrender every part of your life to Him.
- b) This week, reflect on how you understand your own identity. Ask God to reveal to you the parts of your identity that you value above your identity as a child of God; ask Him to help you remember the identity that God has given you through Christ.

Optional Ideas for Prayer Time

- a) In this season, it is important for us to be intentionally praying for each other. This also means that we must each choose to be honest and vulnerable with our prayer requests. Take time to 'check-in' about how each person is doing, and pray for them.

- b) As a group, pray that God would give each person in your group the ability to see the people around them the way that God sees them. Pray that God would help us each to avoid defining ourselves and other people by the groups that we/they belong to.